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BOOK REVIEWS

Mind in the Making. A Study in Mental Development. By EDGAR JAMES SWIFT. New York: Scribners'. Pp. ix+329. \$1.50.

Although consisting of ten essays bearing titles which imply a variety of themes, a single purpose is everywhere evident in this strong and highly suggestive book. It is, in the author's words, "a plea for the personal element in education, and for the extension of the experimental method." Professor Swift believes that "the most significant tendency in educational literature today is the substitution of the individual for the course of study as the basis of constructive pedagogy." This book is likely to prove one of the most influential in this direction, for although many of its chapters are based on careful study of some single phase of the problem there is nowhere any tendency to conceal the results from the general reader by means of technical terminology. We can scarcely conceive that any teacher or thoughtful parent would not be interested in nearly all the essays, and no one engaged in educational or social improvement can rise from its reading without both stimulation and encouragement—stimulation, because it points out so many things that ought to be changed, encouragement, because it shows the value of experiment, and the possibility of correcting the evils.

The first, third, and ninth chapters enforce a somewhat similar thesis under different aspects. The first, "Standards of Human Power," shows from a great number of cases how futile our school standards often are for the measurement of ability. A large number, certainly, of the geniuses of modern times have been very unsuccessful in their school studies. This of course by no means proves that every boy who is stupid in school is to be a genius in later life—unless we keep him so long in our grind that he finally becomes tamed to it, and spoiled for anything original—but it does show that no teacher or parent has any right to treat a child as hopeless or as below par, merely because he cannot do mathematics or learn foreign languages, or because his mind has too much latent logic to yield admission to English spelling. Failure in school studies may be due to lack of ability, but it may occur because the supposedly negligent, indolent and dull are like the cases studied, "too forceful natures to be satisfied with a narrow range." School studies "require a certain specialized ability, just as puzzles do, but it does not follow that those who cannot do them successfully are dull." "What then," the bewildered teacher and parent may cry: "Are we to abandon all our scheme of studies, the fruit of all our science and culture?" Doubtless not this, but we ought at least, instead of looking on our curriculum as sacred and jamming our children into it, to look at the child on the one hand and the studies on the other as somewhat evenly balanced in value. Then if the child does not fit into the curriculum, we shall consider it as possibly the fault of the curriculum, rather than of the child. Chap. iii on "The School and the Individual" is a plea for a study of individual children

on the part of the teacher. "The dominant sin of the schoolmaster is the attempt to make children homogeneous." Chap. ix, "School-Mastering Education," challenges many of the present "idols," and demands greater freedom for the individual teacher as well as a greater flexibility in all lines of instruction.

Chap. ii, "Criminal Tendencies of Boys," is based on a *questionnaire* sent to teachers and others who presumably are not living a violent or desperate life. Professor Swift finds their boyhood ideas and performances not very different from the histories of boys in the Wisconsin Reform School. Most men with red blood in their bodies know these facts, but it is impressive to have them brought together. It is a defect in the chapter that the author draws mainly on Letourneau for his pictures of primitive morality. To one who has pondered the careful studies of Spencer and Gillen, such a sentence as that quoted on p. 57, "The Australian language has no words for justice, error, or crime" is too much like arguing that there are no gentlemen in Germany and no homes in France because there is no precise equivalent in German and French for, "gentleman" and "home." This, however, is merely incidental. The main thesis of the chapter is not affected: "It is doubtful whether in three-fourths of the cases criminal tendencies are anything more than a convenient name with which to cover our social sins and failure in education."

Chaps. iv and v deal with the influence of physical conditions upon the mental life. Chapter vi, on "The Psychology of Learning," gives the results of experiments in learning both manual dexterity, in ball-tossing and typewriting, and vocabulary in a new language. The whole study is highly instructive for the teacher in his everyday work. It shows that progress must not be expected to be uniform, that there must be "plateaus" when there is seemingly no progress, and many "off-days" when there is seeming retrogression. The teacher who has read this chapter need not be discouraged by such periods, and will have more sympathy for the learners as he appreciates that "equal amounts of work do not produce equivalent results" at different times. "Overstrain and hurry tend to mental confusion, rather than clarification."

The final chapter, "Reconstruction of Nature" (and the concluding pages of the preceding chapter) is an impressive demand for a larger conception of education than that of merely adapting the child to the existing civilization. "The animal method of education is for static life—stability; with man it must be for dynamic life—change, improvement." Social progress is at present impeded, friction is produced by any attempt at reform, largely because "education has been engrossed in the comparatively petty rôle of teaching lessons." The current method is to impede social transitions; the intelligent course is to facilitate them." When educators rise above mere scholmastering, social deadlocks and cataclysms will be of the past," and in urging that the teacher must know society if he is to fit for membership in it, he strikes a note like that which Chancellor sounds so forcibly. We shall see increasingly that education if it is to do its own work cannot take orders passively from other interests. If the economic order or political institutions interfere with education, self-respect and duty command a larger outlook and a greater independence for the educator's work. The society of tomorrow for which the educator works has its claims as well as the order of today.

J. H. T.